DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 185 492 CG 014 403

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TITLE An Experiment in Cross-Age Peer Interaction.
PUB DATE [79]
NOTE 41p.; Best copy available.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adolescents; *Cross Age Teaching; *Developmental Programs; Elementary Education; Grade 6; High School Students; *Interaction; *Leadership Training; Peer Counseling; *Peer Teaching; Secondary Education; Youth Leaders

ABSTRACT

A program of aiding sixth grade adolescent development by using high school student leaders to interact with them is described. The development of the program, screening procedures for peer leaders, training outline for leadership and communication skills, and evaluations are presented. Tables of peer interaction evaluation, staff evaluation forms, and trainer evaluation forms are included. (BCR)

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CG 014403

AN EXPERIMENT IN CROSS-AGE PEER INTERACTION

Barry C. Mason

During the 1977-78 school year an idea was born in the Abington Heights School District. The idea came about as a result of a middle school counselor and a sixth grade teacher collaborating on the best method for teaching adolescent development (a part of the curriculum) to sixth grade students. After trying the traditional approach, the thought occurred that perhaps the best people to tell about adolescence might be the adolescents themselves. It was hypothesized that high school students might do a better job than adults in providing insight into this difficult phase of development.

A call to the high school was all that was needed to recruit six highly competent students. The counselor briefed the volunteers and gave them a discussion guide to follow. They then traveled to the middle school to conduct a one hour discussion session with their younger peers. The response from the youngsters was so positive and the enthusiasm so great, that it became crystal clear that here was a potentially dynamic source of communication and inspiration. What would happen if high schoolers were actually trained in communication and leadership techniques? What kind of an impact would more interaction have upon the sixth graders? Could high school students serve as positive role models for their younger peers? These and many other questions were bantered about after this initial experience.

Then the opportunity presented itself; the Lackawanna County Drug and Alcohol Commission encouraged the school to develop a project for a mini-grant ($2,000.00 for the 1978-79 school year). The challenge was accepted and an experimental program was developed. The proposal appears on pages 7A and 8A.

The grant was approved and the project began. First, the middle school counselor was sent off to a National Training Laboratories, Human Interaction Lab to enhance his group leadership skills and to develop great more expertise in the area of Human Interaction. Returning from this experience, refreshed and fortified with new insights and learnings, the counselor in collaboration with the school administration and in consultation with an outside consultant, proceeded to develop a format for the leadership training program. The training outline appears on pages 11B thru 17B.

The high school juniors and seniors were asked to make application (on page 10A) and were subsequently screened by the high school counselors and administrators. Candidates were selected on the basis of their general character and attitudes toward school in order to insure the recruitment of positive role models. Fortunately, none of the twenty-three applicants had to be eliminated. The training sessions began in February with weekly after school sessions. Since each session lasted three hours, the trainees were provided with snacks and a short social break during each session. Unfortunately, six of the candidates for various reasons, (i.e. work schedules, sports, fright, dissatisfaction, etc) dropped out of the program before its completion. Seventeen of the students successfully completed the training and became the peer leaders. The actual training program closely followed the outline, however, more time was needed in developing listening skills and less emphasis was placed upon the desision making skills. Another variation from the outline was the addition of two television sessions in which each leader was video taped in action. The group role played what they considered typical 12 year old behavior and the leaders practiced their skills. They then critiqued their performance and shared observations with their peers. During these latter sessions the leaders developed outlines, including objectives and strategies to be used in their sessions with the sixth graders.

After completion of the training, the leaders were scheduled to meet with the sixth grade teachers, in order to coordinate efforts and gain some insight into their assigned groups. The teachers helped the leaders become comfortable with the physical setting of each team and offered sound advise for dealing with the sixth grade youngsters. They were also very cooperative in helping the counselor schedule the two hundred fifty-seven younsters for the peer sessions. The teachers broke each of the teams (approximately 85 students each) into small groups of nine to thirteen students and scheduled the peer leaders to meet with their youngsters for five consecutive days. The sessions were to be an hour long and the groups were to be spread out in order to afford as much privacy as possible. Because of the numbers most of the leaders had to conduct two different groups. It should be noted that the Peer sessions were scheduled during school time and it was necessary for the leaders to make up any work missed. Though this did created some problems, the high school teachers were very cooperative. A conscious effort was made to stagger the times so they would not miss the same class each day..

The peer leaders having been primed and armed with their objectives and strategies then embarked upon this scary adventure. The team teachers and the counselor remained completely in the background, observing from a distance, so as not to inhibit the interaction process. It was not long before the leaders had seemingly won over their younger peers. There was excitement, enthusiasm, and a general atmosphere of friendship and openness. The leaders emerged from their initial sessions very enlightened and anxious about continuing. They were amazed with what they saw and heard and absolutely astounded by some of the misconceptions of their charges. They made statements such as; "My group thought that all high school students drink and smoke", or "My group actually thought that we have drinking parties and pot parties in the halls of the school". One leader was amazed to find that some kids in his group were frightened to death about going to high school, another that his kids thought

sexual intercourse was a prerequisite for being accepted in high school. There were many similar expressions and the leaders quickly became highly motivated to set the record straight. In most groups as the sessions continued, the discussions revolved more and more around adolescent decision making and how to maintain ones values in the face of tremendous peer pressures. Th leaders utilized many of the same strategies they had undergone in their own training including trust games, role playing, sharing triads, etc. They all shared their own values and discussed how they had survived the stormy early adolescent period. By the end of the sessions the leaders had developed a warm and trusting climate in which there appeared to be an open exchange of ideas and feelings.

It would be unrealistic to believe that all of the sessions were without problems and that all of the leaders had the competence of master teachers. Some of the leaders were unavoidably placed with some very difficult groups. At times during the course of the week they needed to look to the professionals for help in maintaining control. Some of the leaders also had a very difficult time finding the correct blend of a structured, yet friendly environment. Those who were not as well prpared for the initial sessions quickly learned the value of being over prepared; by the end of the week they were all armed with an abundance of strategies; "just in case". Some leaders had to fight the urge to become kids again; during the joining process some of the leaders identified with some of the immature, destructive behaviors of their groups and had to be reminded that their role was to help the youngsters to grow rather than reinforce such behavior. The leaders were quick to respond once they understood what was happening and were able to counteract any negative influences they might have had.

At the end of the sessions the leaders seemed to be pleased with their accomplishments, however, they had a sense of loss. They wanted to accomplish more than was humanly possible in five short sessions and they wanted some evidence that their intervention made a difference. Most of them expressed a

need to spend more time with their groups, feeling that they had only scratched the surface.

The sixth graders also expressed positive reactions and wished that they could spend more sessions with their leaders. They most certainly were influenced by the novelty of getting out of their regular classes for a "relaxed" period and they all enjoyed the doughnuts the leaders brought for them for their final session. However, beyond the fun and relaxation there was a real appreciation for this opportunity to talk about things they wanted to talk about. The evidence of high interest and enthusiasm among the students, tempered with a seriousness of purpose verified that this was more than just a "fun time" for the kids. They discussed many important issues; such as: How should I act on my first date? How old should I be? How will I stop people from forcing me to do things I don't want to do? What courses will I have to take when I get into high school? Will I have to drink and smoke to have friends? How can I say no? Do all high schoolers engage in sex, etc., etc. The flow of two way communication and the intensity of interaction left little doubt that this was a very meaningful learning experience for the youngsters. The final evaluation report on pages 18C thru 36C seems to bear out this conculsion.

Conclusion: As this article is being written plans are underway to continue the program this year. The school district has included the Peer Interaction Program in the budget and with continued success it may well become a permanent part of the school curriculum. A major purpose of the mini grant concept was to provide impetus for the initiation of preventive mental health programs within the community. In this regard the project was a success.

Since the quality of the project was largely due to the peer leaders, it is only appropriate that they be mentioned in this article. They are: Bonnie Bohanek, Mike Wolk, Larry Wolk, Ed Travis, Karla Notariani, Barbara Melliand, Lori Hostrander, Alexis Wormser, Mary Newville, Jody Habeeb, Judy Heckman, Tina Felker, Nancy Kierzhowski, Gina Murphy, Wendy Wescott, Sue Proday, and Tammy Potts.

ABINGTON HEIGHTS MIDDLE SCHOOL
Clarks Summit, Pa.
18411

June 14, 1978

AN EXPERIMENT IN CROSS AGE PEER INTERACTION -

I. OVERVIEW

The purpose of this project is to test the feasibility of having high school students work with middle school students in the areas of values clarification and adolescent development. The rationale is that high school students appear to have a natural rapport with younger students and seem to be highly influential as role models. It is theorized that a group of high school students thoroughly trained in the areas of communication skills, problem solving and decision making could have a very positive effect upon younger students. The experience should provide positive growth for both sets of students. Hopefully the younger students will develop a better understanding of themselves and be better equipped to face the developmental tasks of adolescence. The high school students should experience increased self-confidence and personal growth while at the same time developing leadership and communication skills.

II. GOALS and OBJECTIVES

A. GOALS

1. To provide a positive growth experience for high school students through interaction with middle school students.
2. To provide a meaningful experience and impart a body of knowledge to middle school students.

B. OBJECTIVES - High School Students

1. High school students develop skills in communicating with others.
2. High school students will gain personal insight and growth.
3. High school students will increase self-confidence and leadership ability.
4. High school students will develop a sensitivity to the needs of others.
5. High school students will gain insight into adolescent development.

- Middle School Students

1. Middle school students will increase in self-awareness.
2. Middle school students will be exposed to strategies for dealing with stress.
3. Middle school students will develop an understanding of adolescence.
4. Middle school students will be better prepared to cope with stresses of adolescence.
5. Middle school students will develop insight into their own personal value systems.

6. Middle school students will increase their communication skills.

III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

A. We believe that middle school students can be better prepared to deal with stresses and decisions of adolescence through interaction with older students. It seems apparent that younger students are highly receptive to the ideas and attitudes of their older peers. Consequently, we believe that this close age group interaction can be a very effective means toward positive growth and development.

B. Work Plan Outline

Step 1 - Train and orient project trainer/coordinator. (August-September)
Step 2 - Sept.-Oct. Twenty high school seniors will be selected on a volunteer basis. These students will be thoroughly screened by high school counselors regarding commit ment and personal integrity.
Step 3 - Dec.-Feb. Two training groups will be formed. Each group will meet (after school) two hours per week for a total of ten weeks.
Step 4 - Febrvcry In-service orientation for middle school involved staff members.
Step 5 - Mar.-May The facilators will then conduct five group sessions with sixth grade students in teams 3 - 4 - 5.

IV. Fiscal Accountability -

A. Budget Summary

1. Coordinator/Trainer - $10.00 hour	
Training - 4 hours/week - 15 weeks	$600.00
Planning - 2 hours/week - 10 weeks	250.00
2. Materials for student training	200.00
3. Secretarial services and supplies	200.00
4. Consulatation and/or education - In-service trainer attend workshop peer counseling consultant to work with staff in-service with teachers.	750.00

Program Objective: To provide a positive growth experience for high school and middle school students.

V. PROJECT EVALUATION

A. High school students will be given an attitude questionnaire.

B. Middle school students will be given an evaluation regarding attitudes toward the project.

C. Written evaluation by the project trainer/coordinator.

D. Written evaluation by staff members involved.

E. Letter for parent feedback.

ABINGTON HEIGHTS HIGH SCHOOL
Clarks Summit, Pa. 18411

TO: Juniors and Seniors

FROM: Guidance Department

RE: Cross-Age Peer Interaction Group Training

DATE: January 16, 1979

A special training program for junior and senior students will be held during the months of January-March. It will involve two (2) hours per week for a period of (10) weeks. Meetings will be held after school or in the evening. The training sessions will emphasize the development of communications skills, will work to increase a student's self-confidence and leadership ability, and develop a sensitivity to the needs of others. It is hoped that students will gain in personal growth and insight as a result of this experience.

The purpose of the training program will be to prepare high school students to interact with middle school students. Upon successful completion of the program, each participant will conduct group discussion/interaction sessions with 6th grade students.

Twenty students will be selected to participate in the training program. If you wish to be considered, obtain an application in the guidance office. Completed applications must be returned by Jan. 26,1979. If you have questions about the program, see Mr. Wohkittel.

ABINGTON HEIGHTS HIGH SCHOOL
Clarks Summit, Pa. 18411

APPLICATION FOR CROSS-AGE PEER-INTERACTION GROUP

Name _____ Grade _____ Date _____

Interest In Program? _____

_____

_____

_____

Extra-Curricular Activities (School and Community) _____

_____

_____

_____

Positions of Leadership Held _____

_____

_____

Experience in Working With Children _____

_____

_____

_____

Signed: _____
(Student)

_____
(Parent)

10A

Please return to the Guidance Office by January 26, 1979.

TRAINING OUTLINE - PEER INTERACTION

The purpose of the peer interaction training project is to prepare high school students to effectively communicate and interact with younger (middle school) students. The ultimate goal will be to help the middle school students to understand and better cope with the developmental period of adolescence.

SESSION	OBJECTIVES	METHODS
1	1. Develop trusting, open, atmosphere	Get acquainted excerises a. Bicycle chain - eye contact b. Name chain c. Sharing - things TRIADS How are you feelings
	2. Orient students as to task to be accomplished	Mini lecture - What will be expected of them
	3. Create an attitude of movement toward positive personal growth	Goal setting exercise

SESSION	OBJECTIVES	METHODS
2	1. Reinforce feelings of trust and comfort	Self disclosure ecercise - TRIADS
	2. To introduce the concept of adolescencs as a developmental phase along a growth continuom	Mini Lecture What are tasks?, etc.
	3. To motivate students to begin process of introspection	Who am I exercise
3	1. Reinforce feelings of trust	Trust games
	2. Define meaningful communication	Mini lecture
	3. To help students recognize importance of non-verbal communication in interpersonal relations	List - liked people - Why What said or did
	4. To develop sensitivity to non-verbal cues	Statue game puzzle game
	5. To reinforce P.S. Self esteem	Pos. feedback session

SESSION	OBJECTIVES	METHODS
4	1. To help students recognize the importance of both non verbal - verbal communication 2. Develop skill in clarification of messages 3. To develop skill in sending accurate messages 4. Develop means for conflict resolution	Puzzle game Two way communication exercise Reflective " Listening exercise "I" message excercise -- owning the problem -- Role playing
5	1. Provide practice in sending and receiving accurate messages 2. To help students increase sensitivity to others - reading both verbal and non verbal cues 3. To help students perceive themselves realistically 4. Develop foundation for Decision Making Skills	Role Play TRIADS I see you in the future What might get in your way Feedback session for those who want it I am - Ought to be exercise

SESSION	OBJECTIVES	METHODS
6	1. To present fact that everyone controls his own destiny - Freedom to choose 2. To focus on choices that must be made during adolescence 3. Develop skill in effective decision making 4. To help students analyse themselves in terms of the decisions they make	Mini lecture TRAIDS - Develop list of choices (Early - middle - leate) TRIADS - Listening to Head-heart making decision Pro -con Role play
7	1. To help students focus on and better understand the 12 year old 2. To help students develop confidence Give direction for task 3. Develop basic leadership skills Group process 4. Give participants opportunity to practice skills - Communication Control Sensitivity	Mini Lecture Role play group discussion TRIADS - Develop format for five sessions Mini Lecture Role Play Double circle Observer feedback

SESSION	OBJECTIVES	METHODS
8	1. To reinforce confidence in completing task 2. To develop plans for working with youngsters - Tap creativity of group 3. Provide opportunity for participants to practice tentative plans	TRIADS Develop topics for discussion Brainstorming session TRIADS Decision making session Role Playing
9	1. To provide opportunity for participants to practice leadership skills _ Reinforce self confidence 2. To provide participants with objective feedback 3. To present guideline for the peer sessions 4. To clear up any problems or concerns about what students will do in the peer sessions	Role playing Feedback by pbservers Mini Lecture Question and answer session

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SESSION	OBJECTIVES	METHODS
10	1. To evaluate the success of the program	Post attitudinal survey Group discussion List Strengths - weaknesses
	2. To help students to terminate the group process	Mini Lecture
	3. Formalize termination	Group party

CROSS AGE PEER INTERACTION PROJECT
FINAL EVALUATION (JUNE 1979)

A concerted effort was made to collect data regarding the success of the peer interaction project. First, the sixth grade students were asked to complete an evaluation as to how they felt about the experience and their assessment of the competence of their leaders. Staff members were also asked for feedback regarding any observations, criticisms or comments. The peer leaders then were asked to evaluate their training as well as the actual interaction experience. They were also asked to evaluate the peer group trainer. Finally, a letter was sent to the parents of the sixth grade students asking for any feedback, pro or con.

The sixth grade student evaluation was completed by two hundred fifty seven students; the responses recorded by frequency and percentages appear on Page 4. The graph below (Fig. #1) indicates the percentage of positive as opposed to neutral and negative responses.

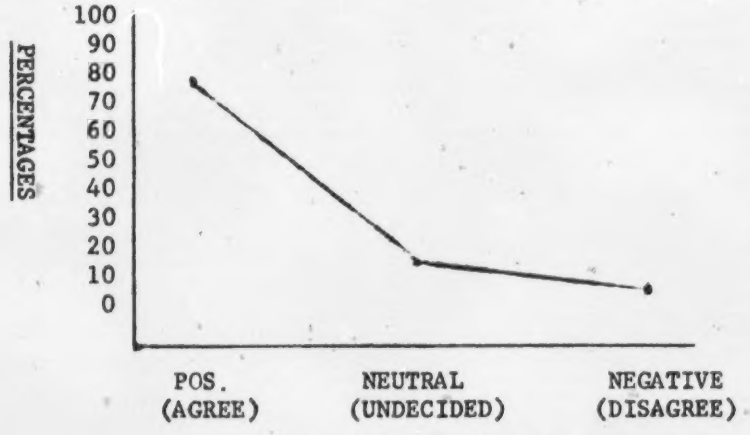

FIGURE #1 Percentages of positive, neutral, and negative responses on the sixth grade evaluation.

The first eight questions of the questionaire on page 4 were designed to determine the general attitude of the sixth grade students. The last seven questions dealt with the student's assessment of the leadership of their high school peers. It was evident that many of the youngsters seemed to enjoy the experience and felt that it was of value in helping them prepare for the future. They also gave their peer leaders credit for their leadership capabilities and their ability to communicate effectively.

A prime objective of the project was that the high schoolers create an open and free atmosphere in which the younger students could feel free to talk about their concerns and ask questions about growing up. Fulfillment of this goal seems to be reflected in items #3 (95% positive response), #10 (93%), and #11 (91%). Another major objective was to give the youngsters a sence of security about entering adolescence. Items #1 (77% positive response), #5 (69%), #6 (82%), #7 (72%) seems to indicate that the youngsters were positively affected, however, a follow-up study in five or six years might be in order.

Though it was not a major objective, it was hoped that the peer sessions would be a personal growth experience in which the youngsters would increase their interpersonal skills. Responses to items #2 (59% positive response), #5 (69%), and #8 (53%) seems to indicate that the sessions were less effecitve in this area. Perhaps this objective should be given greater emphasis in any future projects.

The sixth graders generally gave their group leaders praise for their leadership qualities. Items 9 through 11 (over 90% positive responses) and items 12, 13, and 15 (over 80% positive responses). The lowest score was on item #14 regarding the leaders control over the group. It should, however, be pointed out that the sixth graders were not screened and that a few of the groups were very difficult to handle.

The peer leaders did not allow any group to get "out of hand".

The fact that the peer leaders gained the respect and admiration of the sixth graders is certainly reflected in the last seven items. Though these particular students would have been respected and admired regardless of the training program, it is hoped that the training programs contributed to this high assessment.

A sampling of the comments made by each of the teams appears on pages 5, 6, and 7. These statements speak for themselves.

Peer Interaction

Sixth Grade Evaluation Form Totals Teams 3 - 4 - 5

	AGREE	UNDECIDED	DISAGREE
1. I really learned a lot about teenagers and growing up.	(77%) 198	(19%) 50	(4%) 9
2. I now feel better about being me.	(59%) 152	(33%) 85	(8%) 20
3. I really enjoyed the discussion groups with the High School students.	(95%) 243	(3%) 10	(2%) 4
4. I think all kids should have a chance to talk with the High School kids.	(87%) 226	(11%) 27	(2%) 4
5. I think I am better prepared to deal with some of the teenage problems I will face.	(69%) 177	(28%) 72	(3%) 8
6. I now understand some of the choices I will have to make as a teenager.	(82%) 211	(17%) 44	(1%) 2
7. I think I am better prepared to make wise choices.	(72%) 185	(25%) 65	(3%) 7
8. I understand myself better.	(53%) 135	(37%) 97	(10%) 25
9. My leader was very good.	(94%) 241	(4%) 11	(2%) 5
10. My leader really listened to us.	(93%) 239	(5%) 14	(2%) 5
11. My leader was open and honest with us.	(91%) 235	(7%) 17	(2%) 5
12. My leader really kept us interested.	(82%) 209	(12%) 32	(6%) 16
13. My leader really seemed to know what she/he was doing.	(88%) 226	(9%) 23	(3%) 8
14. My leader had good control over the group.	(66%) 169	(24%) 63	(10%) 25
15. My leader really looked and acted grown up.	(85%) 218	(12%) 31	(3%) 8
Totals:	(79%) 3064	(17%) 641	(4%) 150

Peer Interaction

Sixth Grade Evaluation Form

Team 3

This is a sampling of comments made:

Group discussions were fun as well as educational.
Sitting and talking was good to do for a change.
The discussions ere very good - I think others should have them.
It would be a good influence on them.
I had fun.
I wish it was longer.
The kids learned a lot.
I learned about myself and other people.
My leader was very nice.
My leader really taught us a lot about teenagers and growing up.
Thank you for coming - and thank you for the doughnuts.
I didn't learn anything new.
We talked about decisions we will have to make.
It really helped me understand more about what will happen.
I allready knew all that stuff.
I enjoyed it very much - too bad we couldn't have it longer.
I would like to have it next year.
She was really easy to talk to - She was just like one of us only more experienced.
I liked how she told us what she did in life - She was honest with us.
I wish we could have it more often than one week.
My leader was really serious.
My leader was nice and really knew how to handle and talk to us.
My leader came well prepared and was very open and honest.
It got me prepared for the future.
Now I know what to expect.
I could talk more freely than with a teacher.
He let us speak and really listened.
I felt as though I could trust her.
My leader was very nice - He was also understanding.
It was GREAT!
Every person our age should have a chance to have these interesting groups.
Would like to do it again on different subjects.

Peer Interaction

Sixth Grade Evaluation Form
Team 4

The following are student comments from the evaluation form:

I like it - it was fun and we got out of a class too!
I liked the group because I learned a lot about my age and what not to do when you are a teenager.
It was a very good session any my leader was very good.
My leader was nice and I learned a lot.
It was lots of fun - I wish it was longer, there is much more we could talk about.
Some of the questions are hard to answer.
I think it was good that the students came over because I know a lot more about the Junior High School.
She was a good leader and she understood the kids,
I am glad we had a chance to talk with the teenagers.
I think this course was a very interesting and good idea.
My leader is a very nice person - he is very cool and not hotheaded and you could say anything or talk about anything.
I think it was a lot easier to talk to the High School kids. They understand you a lot better than your parents.
Thanks.
It was neat.
I think it is worth it and I learned something and I enjoyed it.
I think we should have more time with the high school students.
It was fun and I think all kids should have a period like that.
She wormed her way around the points. She was indirect!
I liked the leader that we had, I think she was the best one in the whole team.
Those doughnuts were delicious.
I think I learned a lot about growing up and facing problems. I really enjoyed these sessions and my leader was very understanding about everything. I wish we could still have these sessions.
The kids that came from the High School really taught me the feelings of life.
My leader was very good. She helped me understand what it would be like to be a teenager at the Senior High.
I hope we have it again. I really think it was good and we had a very good leader.
It was a good idea to have those people come.
It was worth missing school.
My leader answered some of my important questions. The leader was a big help to me.
I didn't like it - I hated it and it shouldn't go on.
I think I learned somethings about whats gonna happen to me with people when I get older.

Peer Interaction

Sixth Grade Evaluation Form

Team 5

The following are student comments from the evaluation form:

I think the leader told us a lot about the school she was in. I liked it a lot. It was fun.
My leader was very nice and tried very hard. I wish she could come back soon.
I think it should have been longer than one week. It was fun.
It was a very good program to have and I learned a lot that I did not know.
I think she was a good leader. Sometimes it got out of hand. I liked her.
The doughnuts were very good - Thanks!
I really liked it, it was fun and I learned so many decisions.
I think that they shouldn't get us too bored, but it was really fun.
The leader paid more attention to the girls and we didn't learn much.
I thought the leader was very honest and realistic. She was wrong on some things, she did not have control over the group except when we did something.
I think we should have this more often.
Sometimes our group got out of control.
My leader lost control over the boys.
I thought the class was good and I really learned a lot.
I thought the sessions were good.
I disagree because some of the kids were acting up and she didn't know how to handle them.
We should have them come in more.
I really liked our teacher, she was very good and open to us.
My leader was really good and told us some of her problems.
I think I learned a lot about growing up. My leader was nice and understands our problems.
I think my leader seemed grown-up for a junior in High School. She was honest with us and really nice but she had control over us.
It was a lot of fun and I feel better about it. I think it was good to have someone to talk to, plus she was nice to us.
I have no comment but that the discussion was fun!
My leader would make a good teacher.
I always felt the same.
I really enjoyed having this session and I wish next year they will have the same thing.
It was interesting and fun. My leader was exciting and kind.
I disagree about feeling better about me because everybody else said they went to dances, I've never done stuff like them.
I really liked my leader, she let us talk and we learned a lot.
My leader was a super leader and I thank her for coming here!
My leader really looked and acted grown up but not <u>too</u> grown up so I felt like I was talking to a teacher.
I liked all of the things we talked about.
I really liked my leader, he was cool.
My leader was nice and listened to what I said.
My leader is very nice and I would enjoy working with her again.
I think we could have it all year, it really helped me.

Members of the involved middle school teaching staff (12 teachers) were invited to offer their reactions through the attitude inventory on page 9. Eight of them responded; others indicated they did not feel qualified to judge the sessions since they were not physically present during the sessions. The first eight items evaluate the quality of peer leadership and the last four were designed to assess the educational value of the sessions.

The teachers seem to have been favorably impressed with the peer leaders and their ability to create a positive enviornment for open communication. They commended them for their demeanor and for their maturity in acting as role models.

The teachers were more dubious about the degree of skill development and learning achieved during the sessions. This seems to be in concert with the reactions of the youngsters and should be given consideration.

It is significant that no staff member offered any strong or mild negative reactions to the project. A few teachers did express verbal apprehension during the sessions, however, their fears seem to have allayed in the final analysis.

Several administrators and a school board member visited during the interaction sessions; they seemed to have been favorably impressed with what they saw and heard. At least there were no strong unfavorable comments or complaints received.

PEER INTERACTION

STAFF EVALUATION

CIRCLE ONE

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	UNDECIDED	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
1. Peer leaders created a true interaction experience for the youngsters	5 (63%)	3 (37%)			
2. Peer leaders created a free and open atmosphere conducive to effective "two way" communication	4 (50%)	3 (38%)	1 (12%)		
3. Peer leaders gained the respect of their group members	2 (26%)	6 (75%)			
4. Peer leaders were able to maintain good control over their groups		7 (88%)	1 (12%)		
5. Peer leaders seemed to be well prepared	4 (50%)	4 (50)			
6. Peer leaders exercised a very positive influence over their groups	2 (25%)	4 (50%)	2 (25%)		
7. Peer leaders served as positive robe models for the youngsters	2 (25%)	6 (75%)			
8. Peer leaders exercised good judgment and common sense in dealing with their their groups	2 (25%)	4 (50%)	2 (25%)		
9. Students benefited from this exper - ience	4 (50%)	2 (25%)	2 (25%)		
10. Students felt free to voice their concerns about growing up	4 (50%)	4 (50%)			
11. Students grew in their understanding of the "teenage years"	3 (38%)	2 (25%)	3 (38%)		
12. Students learned some new skills in dealing with peer pressure and de- cision making	1 (12%)	3 (38%)	4 (50%)		
	33 (34%)	48 (50%)	15 (16%)		

COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS:

The Final Evaluation completed by the seventeen peer leaders regarding their reaction to the training program, assessment of personal growth, and feelings about the success of the project appear on pages 11 and 12. The graph showing percentages of positive as opposed to negative responses in Figure #2 is also skewed to the positive side.

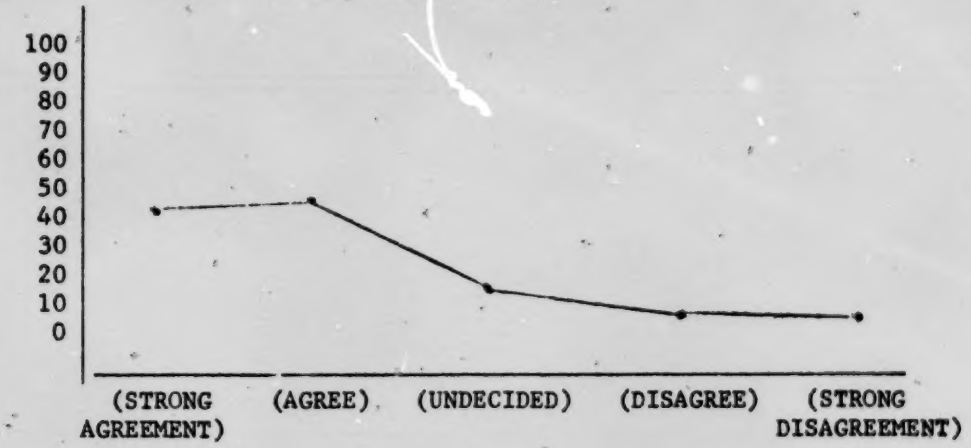

FIGURE #2 Overall percentages of responses to the Peer Leader questionaire

It is significant that all the participants (as reflected in Item #1) agreed that they had undergone personal growth and they unanimously endorsed the peer concept (as reflected in Item #19). It also should be pointed out that Item #16 received the most negative responses, however, this does not necessarily reflect a criticism of the project. Many of the students indicated that they felt that the peer leaders should be responsible students or "have their heads on straight" before being allowed to participate in such a program.

The peer leaders were asked to respond with recommendations and comments for future reference. These responses appear on pages 13, 14, and 15.
They were also asked to evaluate the project trainer. This was done solely for the professional growth and development of that person and was used merely as a feedback device. The evaluation appears on pages 16 and 17.

PEER INTERACTION PROJECT - FINAL EVALUATION

KEY- Stongly Agree - S.A.
Agree - A.
Undecided - U.
Disagree - D.
Strongly Disagree - SD.

	SA.	A.	U.	D.	SD.
1. I view the peer project as being a real growth experience for me	10 (58%)	7 (42%)			
2. I gained more insight into myself and the effect of my behavior on others	10 (58%)	7 (42%)			
3. I increased my communication skills- (the ability to send & receive clear messages)	9 (53%)	8 (47%)			
4. I have become more sensitive to both the verbal & nonverbal cues from others	9 (53%)	7 (41%)	1 (6%)		
5. I learned to listen more effectively	9 (52%)	8 (48%)			
6. I further developed my decision making skills	4 (24%)	10 (59%)	4 (17%)		
7. I learned to be less judgmental and more open to the views of others	5 (29%)	7 (42%)	5 (29%)		
8. I increased my self awareness	4 (24%)	9 (52%)	4 (24%)		
9. I have become more goal oriented	1 (6%)	8 (48%)	6 (35%)	2 (12%)	
10. I feel that I am better equipped to make choices in accord with my values	5 (29%)	10 (59%)	2 (12%)		
11. I have furthered my ability to deal with peer pressure	2 (12%)	11 (65%)	4 (23%)		
12. I now feel more confident in my ability to lead groups	11 (65%)	5 (29%)	1 (6%)		
13. I learned a lot about adolescence	1 (6%)	10 (59%)	5 (29%)	1 (6%)	

KEY - Strongly Agree - S.A.
Agree - A.
Undecided - U.
Disagree - D.
Strongly Disagree - S.D.

	S.A.	A.	U.	D.	S.D.
14. I was well prepared to lead my discussion groups	5 (29%)	10 (59%)	2 (12%)		
15. The training program was well organized	9 (53%)	8 (47%)			
16. All Senior High students should have the opportunity to participate in this program	4 (24%)		5 (29%)	3 (17%)	5 (29%)
17. The Middle School staff was very cooperative and supportive	6 (35%)	10 (59%)		1 (6%)	
18. The sessions with the 6th graders were very productive	6 (35%)	8 (47%)	3 (18%)		
19. I believe that peer interaction is an excellent concept & should be continued	15 (88%)	2 (12%)			
20. I would definitely want to participate in another similiar program	13 (76%)	3 (18%)	1 (6%)		
	138 (41%)	148 (43%)	43 (13%)	7 (2%)	5 (1%)

PEER INTERACTION: The following is a tally of the recommendations and a sampling of comments made:

1. Training sessions (more-less-about same amount of time needed)	Less Time - 4 More Time - 2 Time Just Right - 11
2. Selection process (be more selective or less selective- what criterion)	More selective - 2 Same as this year - 5 Should be open to everyone - 3 Maybe kids should be tested - 1 Select more than needed - High dropout - No comment - 3
3. Training scheduling (Day or half-day workshops vs. after school meetings)	After school - 10 Half day workshops - 7
4. Location of training sessions (H.S. vs. M.S.)	H.S. with Final session at Middle School - 4 H.S. - 11 M.S. - 2
5. Focus of training (Personal growth and development vs. skill development)	Skill development - 3 Equal - 7 Same as this year - 3 Same as this year with a little more skill development - 1
6. Peer sessions (more supervision vs less supervision)	Less teachers or adults inhibited group discussions - 5 Just about right this year - 11 A little more - 1
7. Target group (sixth vs. eighth grade students etc.)	6th grade - 7 Both 6th & 8th grade - 7 Sixth on adolescence Eighth on going to South Campus

8th grade - 6th grade also excellent
8th - 1
7th - 1

30C

8. Staff involvement (more vs. less involvement on part of M.S. staff)

Just right - 6
Undecided - 1
Less - 1
More - 5
More - 1

Teachers helped me better understand the students

Were very pleased teaching, took an honest interest in what we were doing

Follow up would be good

Felt they weren't interested

Were always asking if we needed anything

9. Time allotment for peer sessions (more time vs. less time)

1 hr. - 1 wk.-- 3
More time needed - 9
Depends on the group - 1
(Maybe once/week after initial week)
Same - 4

10. General comments and recommendations:

I thought the whole thing was good

It was very worthwhile to me as well as the students

I enjoyed it

I had fun while learning myself

I wish we would have practiced on each other more

We should meet with 6th graders on adolescent and 8th graders on high school

I feel this program would be better for 7th graders because they are beginning to feel the physical and emotional changes

This project helped me in making plans for my future

Overall I had a great time with the kids & I hope they did to.

Thank you!

10. - Continued

General comments and recommendations:

_____I highly recommend that it be continued next year and I would like to get involved again

_____Thanks again - I think it helped me a lot more than the kids

_____I liked the sessions very much because I feel that I've helped others as well as myself

_____I think it shoul be continued

_____I had a very rewarding experience

_____I think it would be beneficial to anyone who participates, in one way or another

_____One aspect of the program bothered me, I did not have a clear idea of what we were going to do, or what we were supposed to learn and accomplish. I never fully grasped the use of what we learned til the end of the training sessions.

KEY - Exceptional - EX.
Above Average - AA.
Average - A.
Below Average - BA.
Poor - P.

TRAINER EVALUATION:

	EX.	AA.	A.	BA.	P.
A. Manner of presentation					
1. Poise in classroom	65%	29%	6%		
2. Self confidence	71%	18%	12%		
3. Ability to get and hold student cooperation & attention	41%	41%	12%		
4. Ability to speak distinctly & in an engaging voice	71%	12%	12%		
5. Ability to develop a constructive atmosphere	52%	41%	6%		
B. Relationship with students					
1. Ability to make students feel secure and at ease	59%	24%	18%		
2. Interest in students as persons	41%	35%	24%		
3. Friendliness (conversational-sense of humor)	71%	24%	6%		
4. Acceptance of individual differences among students	29%	65%	6%		
5. Listened and was responsive to student needs	35%	41%	18%	1 - no response	
C. Personal Characteristics					
1. Personal appearance	35%	53%	12%		
2. Exercise of good judgment and tact	53%	47%			
3. Emotional stability & maturity, not easily upset	88%	12%			
4. Interest & enthusiasm in carrying out the training program	82%	18%			

D. Knowledge of subject matter & professional skills	EX.	AA.	A.	BA.	P.
1. Knowledge of subject matter	82%	18%			
2. Ability to make work interesting	47%	41%	12%		
3. Ability to transmit enthusiasm and interest to the students	47%	35%	18%		
4. Quality of group discussions	24%	52%	24%		
5. Made helpful & encouraging comments	35%	41%	24%		
E. Classroom Management					
1. Ability to plan & organize activities efficiently	64%	29%	6%		
2. Establishing & maintaining esteem & respect on the part of the students	76%	18%	6%		
3. Degree of clarity in stating training objectives	41%	41%	12%	6%	
4. How well have objectives been attained	41%	35%	24%		
5. Stimulated students to grow and think for themselves	41%	41%	18%		
6. Presented challenging questions and problems for discussions	35%	47%	18%		
7. Freedom to ask questions and express opinions	59%	29%	12%		
8. Pace for covering material was reasonable	12%	47%	24%	18%	

Abington Heights Middle School

Clarks Summit, Pa.

TO: Sixth Grade Parents

FROM: Mr. Oravec, Middle School Principal
Mr. Mason, Guidance Counselor

DATE: May 10, 1979

RE: Peer Interaction Project

This is to inform you that the Peer Interaction Program has been completed. Attached you will find the final sixth grade evaluation tally for Teams 3 - 4 - 5. We were pleased with this response and believe that there is general agreement among the staff, the sixth graders, and the peer leaders that this was a very worthwhile experience. Hopefully we will be able to continue and perhaps improve upon the quality of this program in future years.

To aid us in planning we need all the honest and constructive feedback we can get. We believe that you may have valuable information regarding the success or failure of this year's program. If you would care to share any reaction or ideas please use the space below and return it to your child's teacher. If you wish to respond verbally - call or stop by and see Mr. Mason (586-1281) at the Middle School.

Finally parents were asked to give feedback regarding their reactions to the project through the letter on page 18. Unfortunately, only five parents responded. All of the feedback was positive with parents indicating that their children throughly enjoyed the sessions. One mother did express skepticism but gave wholehearted support to the project. Her only concern was that any such program be conducted with adequate supervision.

In conclusion, the evaluation seemed to indicate that the project was very successful and did fulfill its major objectives. The basic premise of the experiment was that the high school students would have a natural rapport with their younger peers and that if properly trained and motivated, they could serve as positive and highly influential role models. It was also theorized that the training sessions and actual leadership experience would enhance the growth and development of the older students. The feedback seemed to confirm these theories.

Hopefully this project will stimulate more activity utilizing the peer concept and power of group dynamics. The high schoolers pointed out; there is presently little opportunity in our schools for meaningful two-way communication. They said that they seldom get to really know or interact with their classmates and teachers at a meaningful or "human" level. They genuinely expressed appreciation for this opportunity and urged that similar programs become a part of the school curriculum.